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No. 28.

LITTLE CHILDREN.

BY SARAH D. HOBART.

Like the sound of April rain-drops
Falling on the waking earth;
Like the murmur of the waters
Where the valley stream hath birth;
Like the night-bird's tender warble,
Or the wind among the leaves,
Come the voices of the children,
Through the holy Sabbath eve.

Little children, Heaven bless you!
Christ's sweet messengers below;
Making bright the night of sorrow,
Cheering hearts oppressed with woe.
"Let them come!" the Saviour uttered,
Knowing well how pure and true
Are the souls of little children,
Sprinkled with the heavenly dew.

There are clouds to dim the future,
There are crosses to be borne,
And the path where duty leads us
Is beset by many a thorn.
But the love of little children
Sheds its light on our way;
Angel-guides unto the Heaven
Beaming "Heaven's perfect day."

THE GHOST OF NORMAN PARK; OR, Two Women Wronged.

BY MARY ATHERSTONE BIRD.

CHAPTER V.

The morning dawned as brightly as though no deed of horror were contemplated in the dark abysses of man's hateful passions.

Mr. Smedley was in high spirits; and Sir John Norman's laugh rang as loudly, though not quite so heartily, as his own. Lady Norman watched them from a window until they were lost to sight among the trees. She was still gazing down the avenue, and the tears were gathering in her large blue eyes and falling unnoticed, so deeply was she wrapped in thought, when a light step aroused her, and turning round, she saw that it was Mrs. Briggs with her account book, awaiting her usual audience.

"I cannot attend to anything this morning, Briggs," said the young lady, wiping away her tears; "bring your books to-morrow, please. I feel so anxious and unhappy about my father—I wish I had begged him to stay at home this morning. But I laughed at Sir John for the very same thing last evening, so I could not very well confess that I felt still more uneasy only a few hours later. Oh, how I wish he had not gone!"

"I trust no harm may happen to Mr. Smedley, my lady," said the housekeeper, "but still I would not neglect such a warning as you seem to have had. If your ladyship would allow me to advise you, I should say, send out several of the men on horseback the way they are gone, so they may be at hand. Your ladyship might write notes to your father as an excuse, and at all events they could bring back word that he was safe. Oh! be quick—be quick—write, and send them off. Here is your writing-desk. Get the notes ready, while I go and have the horses saddled. My husband knows all the dangerous places, and he'll tell them where to go."

The decision and energy of the housekeeper's manner and character completely dominated over the gentle spirit of Lady Norman. Without a word she began to write with the utmost rapidity.

In half an hour five mounted messengers were dispatched in various directions. In the meantime, Sir John and his unsuspecting guest had entered over some miles of country—park, arable and pasture—and were now entering a belt of thick woodland, covering a steep declivity about a mile from the house. The baronet's voice still rang loudly, and his boisterous laugh was as frequent as ever; but his speech was incoherent, and his laugh was forced.

They approached the bottom of the hill, where the ground was covered with large rough stones. While guiding their horses carefully among these, a sudden silence fell upon the two riders. Mr. Smedley, not being an expert horseman, was somewhat nervous. Sir John remarked this; his keen and crafty eyes wandered round in all directions to see that no witness of the deed he meditated was lurking near.

All was still. The place was lonely. There were neither nuts nor blackberries, birds' nests nor wild strawberries to tempt the truant urchins of the village within its wild precincts. The doomed victim was intent upon picking out the safest footing for his horse. Sir John gave the animal a smart cut with his whip, causing it to start and plunge forward. The frightened rider drew the rein hard up, and his treacherous companion, standing in his stirrups, glared at him with the ferocity of a tiger. The butt-end of his heavy hunting-whip whirled in the air; there was the sound of a blow; the horse again darted forward, and the old man fell off, head foremost.

Did Sir John Norman's imagination deceive him, or did he hear, indeed, a wild and prolonged shriek echoing through the wood? He could not tell—any, in his confusion and excitement, he scarcely heard it; but never will that scene of blood arise upon his memory—and when, unless sta-

peled by intoxication, will it be absent from it?—but his brain will ring with that loud, unearthly wail.

The murderer leaped to the ground, and turned over the body of his victim. Half measures would be fatal; the work must not be left unfinished.

A brief inspection convinced him that no second blow was needed, and he checked the insane impulse that prompted him to strike again, and thus betray to the world that the deed was the result of design, and not of accident.

Trembling in every limb, and reeling like a drunken man, Sir John climbed again into his saddle. The shortest way to the house lay through a dense thicket of underwood, overshadowed by forest-trees. He looked at the narrow path, and shuddered—fearing to enter its dark mazes.

The thought hung so low that they might touch him as he passed, and one fantastic holly-bush that stood in advance of the rest, looked like a human figure with one arm outstretched, ready to clutch at him.

He looked back at the road which he had just traversed with that kind-hearted old man as he cheerfully talked over his benevolent plans for the advancement of the poor. The solemn wood extended up the hill—silent, except when the dead leaves fell, or those already on the ground were stirred by the light foot of the timorous hare.

He looked to right and left—but there was no escaping either way; nothing for it but to dash through the dismal shades before him. Summoning his resolution, he at last set spurs to his horse, and rushed on as though a fiend were following close behind.

On emerging from the wood he came suddenly upon another horseman. Not recognizing one of his own servants, the guilty wretch turned and sought to fly; but the man's voice reassured him.

"If you please, Sir John, I've brought a note from my lady," he began, and stopped in alarm at the white face and ghastly staring eyes that his master turned upon him.

"Ride on—ride on, Tom," said Sir John, recovering himself by a strong effort. "Mr. Smedley has been thrown from his horse, near the old stile quarry, and I fear he is much hurt, if not killed. Go, and stay with him while I call more help."

He galloped on, "staying no further question," while the groom, who was no other than our old friend, Tom Warren, continued his way through the wood.

"It was not for nothing I sent that ghost then," soliloquized Tom, "for I know very well I seen it, let me say what they will. So it was the poor old gentleman that was doomed, was it? Lord! his mercy on us all!"

With this devout aspiration, which was probably the nearest approach to a prayer which was to be found in honest Tom's theological acquirements, he pushed on, anxiously speculating on what was to happen next. But whatever he might have anticipated, it fell far short of the reality that met his sight on quitting the dark copse that had so terrified the guilty conscience of his master.

The body of Mr. Smedley lay upon the rough ground. There was a large wound on the side of his head, from which the blood was flowing. But this ghastly spectacle failed to rivet the man's attention, for kneeling beside the corpse was a female figure clothed in a flowing gray dress, in whom Tom, to his unspeakable dismay, recognized the ghost that had so terrified him in the stable.

The tramp of his horse's feet aroused her attention. She started up, and advanced hastily toward him with her arms

extended, in an attitude of supplication. This looked so awfully like casting a spell upon him, that Tom turned and fled. But in a few minutes, finding there was no pursuit, he paused, and finally summoned courage to return.

As he once again came upon the open space where the body was lying, he found that the ghost was gone, and Mr. Smedley's horse was snuffing, with an uneasy and timorous air, at his master's corpse. Tom's experience was sufficient to convince him that life was quite extinct, and planting himself for safety between the two horses, he awaited, with what patience he could command, the arrival of those whom Sir John had gone to summon.

The poor fellow's natural feelings of awe and dread at finding himself thus alone in such a desolate place, keeping guard over the body of a man who had just met with a violent death, were much enhanced by the consciousness that a being of another world, who, if all tales were true, had also come to a tragical end by her own act, had only a few minutes previously, stood on that very spot, and might of course return when least expected.

The presence of the horses was very comforting, for he still placed considerable faith in the instinctive antipathy which these animals are said to exhibit toward beings of another world, notwithstanding the extraordinary conduct of Gray Meg in caressing the ghost of her former mistress.

A long and dreary time it was to him before the clattering of hoofs and the confused murmur of awestruck voices, announced the approach of those who came prepared to remove the body. They brought with them a hastily constructed litter, and in the foremost horseman, Tom was delighted to recognize Dr. Waldron, the gentleman on whom, it will be remembered, Sir John had endeavored to throw the suspicion of having eloped with the lady who had for a time borne the title of his wife.

The doctor leaped from his horse, and kneeling beside the body, placed his hand upon the heart, lifted the eyelids, and applied other tests to ascertain whether life was extinct.

"There's no hope, I'm afraid, sir, is there?" inquired Tom, respectfully touching his hat.

"Not a spark," said the doctor, who was now examining the wounds on the head; "death must have been instantaneous. Were you present when the accident happened?"

"No, sir. Mr. Smedley was riding with Sir John, and was thrown coming down this hill. He was a very timid rider, poor gentleman!"

"How came you here, then?"

"I was bringing a note, sir, that my lady sent to her father, when I met my master riding home as hard as he could gallop; and he bid me come on here, and wait with Mr. Smedley, for he was much hurt, if not killed outright. That's all I know about it, sir."

Dr. Waldron continued his examination. Close beside the head there was a large, sharp stone on which the old man must have fallen, for it was spattered with blood, and some white hairs adhered to it. But the wound inflicted by it was not sufficient to cause death; and there were other indications evident to the keen eye of the experienced surgeon, for which it was not easy to account. Behind the right ear he discovered a contused wound, about four inches in length, and marked at regular intervals by deeper indentations, from which blood was still flowing. From its situation he yet no doubt that this was the fatal injury, yet he could not have been in-

flicted by the fall. The arms, too, were not extended as a man instinctively does in falling, but lay helpless by his side, one still grasping the whip.

Dr. Waldron had strong suspicions that the death-blow had been inflicted before Mr. Smedley fell from his horse, but he kept his thoughts to himself, merely inquiring whether the groom had altered the position of the corpse. On being answered in the negative, he desired all present to take notice of the position in which it lay, and the general appearance, and then rode off rapidly to attend to Lady Norman, leaving the others to bring home the body.

Many things, in the meantime, had happened in the house. As soon as Lady Norman had dispatched her messengers to her father, on the prompting of the energetic Mrs. Briggs, that worthy woman related to her own parlor, to relieve her feelings by an expression of her anxiety and agitation, a consolation in which, for particular reasons, she could not indulge in the presence of any one but her husband.

"You were very foolish to encourage her nervous fancies," was his encouraging remark. "I don't believe there's any mischief intended. And if there was, how should she know it? Presentiments are all stuff. I've had lots of presentiments in my time, but they never came to nothing."

"Don't people that sleep together often dream the same dream?" said his wife; "and if one person can dream another person's dream, why couldn't they think another person's thoughts? It's my firm belief that he's been hatching some wicked plot all the night, and perhaps talking of it in his sleep, and so he's come to dream about it. And, besides, I tell you I don't know all. There's other people know more than I do, and I act as I'm directed. What in the name of goodness is that noise about?"

They both ran out to ascertain the cause of a sudden commotion in the hall, and found that it was occasioned by the unexpected arrival of Dr. Waldron. Lady Norman had never heard his name, but when informed by Mrs. Briggs that he was an old friend of Sir John's, she hastened to give him a cordial welcome.

After a short interview, the doctor's appearance, his tone of conversation, and quiet, self-possessed, gentlemanly manners, interested the lady so strongly, that she urged him to change his flying visit into a stay of a week at least; and she even communicated to him the strange and increasing disquietude under which she was then suffering with respect to her father's safety.

"I now feel bound to remain for some hours at least," said he, "for it may assist in allaying your uneasiness to know that professional aid is at hand, if it should be needed. But you have already acted so promptly and vigorously that I do not anticipate any very terrible fulfilment of your presentiments."

Dr. Waldron was standing by a window as he spoke, and immediately afterward, he muttered some hasty words of apology and left the room. He had caught sight of Sir John Norman, riding fast toward the house alone, and seemingly in great disorder.

Lady Norman's morning room was in the eastern wing of the building, so that he had some distance to traverse before he reached the hall. When he did so, he met the baronet coming out of the library. Sir John started at the sight of his visitor, and it was plain that the recognition gave him anything but pleasure; but he dissembled his annoyance, welcomed him with friendly words, related the accident that had be-

fallen his father-in-law, and begged him to go to Lady Norman, who he feared, might suffer from hearing the news too hastily.

"Nay," replied the doctor, "I shall go where I am most needed."

And forthwith he gave instructions for making a hasty litter on which the injured man might be safely carried, and set off at the head of the party.

Thus it fell to Sir John to communicate the distressing intelligence to his wife, and it may easily be imagined that he performed the task with no very good grace. Indeed, but for the violence of her own emotions, she would doubtless have detected, amid his confused and contradictory statements, the trouble of the conscious murderer.

Sir John Norman was truly in a pitiable state. All his boasted courage was gone—all presence of mind was lost—he was a slave to the most abject and groundless fears. To his guilty soul the unexpected arrival of Dr. Waldron at this crisis, seemed to be the first step of that avenging fate which the murderer feels is pursuing him from the moment his crime is committed.

While talking with his poor, distracted wife, and endeavoring to go through some stereotyped formula of consolation, his eyes were constantly staring through the window, where he dreaded to see the slow procession of those who bore home the body of his victim, or still worse, some indication that Waldron's quick eyes had detected evidence of his guilt.

At length a single horseman came across the park at full gallop. It was Dr. Waldron.

Sir John left his wife, now—happily for herself—insensible, and ran out, but whether to meet him or escape from him, he hardly knew.

The doctor, as he entered the hall, observed that a hat and gloves, with a small riding-whip, were placed in a conspicuous position on one of the tables. He was certain that these things had not been there before he went out, for he had put his own hat on that very table, and must have seen them, had they been there. His mind being full of suspicions of foul play, he hastily asked one of the servants whose hat that was.

"I think it's my master's, sir," replied the man, "but I never knew him put it there before."

"Is this his whip?"

"Yes, sir, that is Sir John's; but it's not the one he generally uses. He generally likes his hunting-whip."

"Ah! Then he is not gone out again."

Dr. Waldron's manner was so composed that the servant had no suspicion that in thus fixing his attention upon the state of the hat and whip, he was preparing a link in a chain of evidence which might lead to the baronet's being convicted of murder.

But whatever he might suspect, Dr. Waldron scrupulously avoided giving the smallest hint which might arouse a similar train of thought in any other mind, until he was thoroughly satisfied that he should not thereby commit a fearful injustice. And even should all doubts be dispelled from his own judgment, he shrank from inflicting so much agony on that poor girl, for whom he already felt the deepest sympathy. Yet she must know all, for better were any suffering—death—insanity itself—than to rest, ignorant of the truth, in the arms of her father's murderer.

With an inward prayer that this question might be decided without his agency, he turned to enter the library, recollecting that Sir John had gone there immediately on his return, and thinking that he might discover there some proof of his guilt. As he was at the door, the baronet seized him by the arm.

"How did you find the poor old man?" he asked, in an agitated voice.

"Exactly as you left him—stone dead," replied the doctor, fixing a steady gaze upon the other's restless eyes.

"Then, for Heaven's sake, go and tell my wife. I cannot return to her; I am quite unnerved."

"You must have been very near him when he fell," said Dr. Waldron, pointing to a small splash of blood upon Sir John's shirt front.

With the blind impulse of guilt the baronet hurriedly buttoned his coat over the tell-tale spot.

"I—I turned the body over, you know," he stammered out; "I daresay I'm spotted all over with blood. Ah! what's that?" he cried, with a gasping scream, as a large sweat-drop fell upon his hand from his own convulsed forehead.

"Ugh! ugh! ugh!" he laughed, hysterically, when he saw what it was, "the sight of my poor wife's distress has made me so giddy as to make me think. Do pray go to her at once, Waldron, that's a good fellow!"

Dr. Waldron had stood calmly observant while the guilty wretch thus laid bare his soul before him in his attempts to appear innocent of the crime. Without a word he now turned and went swiftly back to Lady Norman's room.

Sir John, after casting a cautious glance around, as though he were about to commit some deed that it was necessary to conceal, slunk into the library, and looked the door. Still glancing round, like one who fears detection, he hurried to a table which was covered by a heavy drapery that reached the floor. Raising the cloth, he sought eagerly for some object, which, apparently, he could not find. From being timid and cautious, he now became extravagantly violent. He dragged the table from its place; he pulled off the cover and threw it in a heap; he shook the curtains from their fastenings; he searched round and round the room. In vain—the thing he sought was not to be found there.

A loud knocking at the door startled him. He flung the cloth upon the table and covered beneath it, following the first impulse to hide from the pursuit which he imagined had already commenced.

"Sir John! Sir John!" cried the well-known voice of one of his own servants, "will you please come to my lady?"

"Foot!" exclaimed the baronet, starting from his hiding-place. "I am bringing suspicion upon myself!"

He ran into the hall, but staggered back; for at that moment the litter on which lay the corpse of Mr. Smedley, was brought in and deposited at his feet.

He started aside, and fled away as though the avenger of blood were literally behind him.

CHAPTER VI.

While Sir John Norman was pursuing his vain search in the library, Mrs. Briggs, who had been in active attendance upon Lady Norman, ran with breathless speed to her own parlor, drew the bolt, and, opening a narrow door, concealed in the recess of a dark closet, she entered one of those apartments which had been so long abandoned to the family ghosts.

This room was furnished in an antique fashion, but with every attention to comfort. The carpet, though its rich colors were faded, was thick and exquisitely clean; the heavy furniture was highly polished, and though there was no grate in the wide fire place, the bright androome supported a pile of blazing logs that threw out a far more genial and cheerful warmth than a coal fire could afford. Yet, notwithstanding every effort to make the best of the room, there was a strange, gloomy, haunted look about it. The windows were tall and narrow, and half-covered with ivy, while lofty trees waved their long branches around, obscuring the light of day, and shutting out the prospect except at one spot where a glimpse could be had of the narrow dell on one side of which the house was built, and of the opposite bank, which presented an almost precipitous declivity, clothed with stunted brushwood.

In the depth below rolled a dark stream, which after watering the park and grounds, here rushed, deep and rapid, in its straitened course through this weird ravine on its way to the ocean. The ceaseless, sullen moaning of the water, "chafing with the mountain's side," was heard in the room I have been describing, and added not a little to its gloomy gloom. Yet there were many signs besides the roaring fire, that it was occupied, and by a person of taste and refinement. An embroidery frame stood near one of the windows, while drawing materials covered a table in another, and books and work lay about in various directions.

But the object that at once arrested the housekeeper's attention, was a female figure that lay extended on the floor. She raised her gently, disclosing the face of a woman still young and eminently handsome, though pale and careworn. In her hand she held firmly a heavy hunting-whip, the handle of which was covered with blood, to which clung a few white hairs.

The reasoning of a quick-witted woman is so rapid, that men, who arrive at the same result by a slow process of logic, choose to call it instinct. He it is; yet the bird that by a swift flight perches on a point of rock, is as surely there as the cragman who lumbers after it, step by step.

It was by this intuitive insight that Mrs. Briggs comprehended the whole truth

kind sea air, nor the bright sunshine, nor any kindness that could be shown her, could arrest the progress of Claudia Wynne toward the threshold of the next world.

Not that she was unhappy—on the contrary, her heart was full of peace and content, and she was always ready with a smile when greeted by any of the longers on the Parade, where her light wheeled-chair was always the centre of attraction wherever she appeared out of doors.

And so winter had passed away, and brightened into spring, which in its turn had blossomed into summer, and the first and stilt of autumn lay upon the leaves, and still Claudia lived freely on. Frank went from London several times to see her, and always found her the same happy, tranquil creature, though his heart was wrung on each succeeding visit to see the ravages which each succeeding week was making. To those about her it was not so perceptible; indeed, they thought her better. But she was not deceived, and as the summer waned away she began to yearn for home, for the dear house in Baywater—dear to her from many a fond association, and she returned to town, with Frank for her companion.

"It is so good to be at home," she said, when they had carried her in and laid her upon the couch in the pretty little drawing-room.

"I need to have such a dread of dying alone; and now see how many friends I muster—you the first amongst them."

"Don't talk of dying, Claudia—let me keep you while I can," Frank answered, sorrowfully. "I've not much left to care for in the world if I lose the best, the truest friend I have."

"You forget Alma," she answered, reproachfully. "Look at it as you will, you cannot alter Heaven's pleasure. But I will not speak of my death if it makes you so sad. Bring me that desk, and I will show you some of my treasures."

He crossed the room for the desk she had pointed out, and bringing it to her, they spent some time in turning over the varied contents. There were letters of flattering import to the successful actress from people of high standing in the world, trinkets and gifts from many a titled warrior, and stored away in a secret drawer which opened with a spring, a locket, containing a miniature of her mother.

There was something else, too, at the sight of which Claudia uttered an exclamation, a staid of curious workmanship—a quaint device on a ground of dark-blue enamel, and set in gold.

"I had forgotten this," she said. "Where is it?"

"Jasper Glosson's—the man I have so vainly striven to find. When he tried to murder my mother, she struggled with him, and clenching at his breast, that staid came out in her hand. She bade me keep it, and when I should find the other two, to lay my hand upon the owner as the man she had sworn to denounce to justice."

Frank took the trinket, and looked at it with a strange interest. Here was another trace of this man's existence—would he ever find the end of the clue?

"Will you give it me?" he asked.

"Yes, you can keep it. But I don't think he will ever be found now. I believe he must be dead."

"Perhaps," by the way, Claudia, Anstin Bertram returns next week. He has written to me to have his apartments put in order."

"Ah," she answered, listlessly. "But what made you think of him?"

"I hardly know, unless the connection of his name with this man's, which his illness made me acquainted with. I feel assured he knows something of him."

"Don't let us talk of him any more, Frank. I want to tell you something. I am going to write to—Alma."

"To Alma?"

"Yes, I want her to come back to England at once."

Her heart gave a sudden bound of pain at the sight of the joy which overspread his face at her words, but she concealed it, and said, smilingly:

"Are you not glad?"

"Glad?"

"Yes; would you not like to see her?"

"You know I should. But why is this, Claudia? Are you feeling worse? Surely you do not think that you are—"

"Dying? No, not yet, Frank. I am safe to last till the winter comes, I think; but I want to see her again before I leave this world, to talk to her while I am able to enjoy her society. I want to have her near me—near me, Frank—my brother, and see some of the happiness that I shall leave behind me when I die."

"But Alma will not meet me," he said, despondingly. "She fears what the world would say of her."

"She will forget all that in time. I hope to see you married, and I think she will not refuse if I ask her."

Frank was not so sure upon this point, however. Claudia's few words had raised a strange feeling at his heart, and he went away with the staid in his pocket, but thinking less of it, or the mysterious Jasper Glosson, than of Alma and the prospect of happiness before him.

Married to her before the death which seemed so awfully near now. He scarcely dared to hope it, and yet, his long love and their mutual suffering might plead with her for him, and he fell into a reverie of a blissful future with the loved one of his boyhood and his youth.

Claudia lost all in writing to Naples, where Alma and Mrs. Everfield were staying, and a letter came by her return of post to say that they would start for England immediately, for Mrs. Everfield had contracted almost as great a regard for the actress as her niece had; and had even offered in the fulness of her gratitude to remain and nurse Claudia, if she would have allowed it.

Several days must necessarily elapse before Alma and her aunt could follow their letter, and during the interval Frank's thoughts received plenty of occupation from the occurrence of a curious circumstance. He had given the landlady, according to Anstin Bertram's request, information of the gentleman's expected arrival, and the good woman had immediately set to work at giving his apartments what she called "a thorough good turn out," to attain which laudable and much-to-be-desired end carpets were taken up, curtains down, and the whole house thrown into that state of confusion which seems inseparable from such operations.

Frank Vavasour discovered that he was to be a victim to the cleaning mania, for his rooms were invaded ever and anon by the gaunt charwoman who had been called in to supplement the labors of the regular servant, while occasionally the worthy landlady herself would appear, to offer a request that some articles or other might be placed in his room for his safety.

As a matter of course he could not refuse, but he began heartily to wish that there were no such things as brooms or housemaids in the world, when, one morning, while sitting at breakfast, he was startled by a loud crash in the rooms overhead, which were those preparing for Mr.

Bertram, and immediately ensued a cry of lamentation and despair.

Presently the landlady appeared, her rubicund face set in lugubrious mould, and entreated his presence. He followed her up the stairs to find the whole household assembled, and the unfortunate charwoman seated in despair, and wringing her hands over the ruins of a small Indian cabinet, which she had contrived to throw down while moving it.

The doors were broken, and the contents forcing their way out, and the landlady gazed at the wreck in horror.

"Whatever shall I do?" she exclaimed, piteously. "That cabinet that Mr. Bertram was always so particular about, and wouldn't let anybody touch but himself."

And then she turned upon the unfortunate cause of the mischief, who could only weep and wring her hands.

"Frank come to the rescue, and examine the damaged article," she said.

"Let me look at it," he said. "There may not be much harm done after all."

He stepped forward as he spoke, and stooped to pick up a small glittering object, which had apparently fallen from one of the opened drawers.

"Good gracious, Mr. Vavasour!" exclaimed the landlady; "whatever is the matter?"

For Frank had started as though stung by an adder, and was gazing with pale face and distended eyes upon what he had just picked up.

"At last! at last!" he muttered.

(To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 9.)

MAB.

Nearly everybody in the quiet old cathedral town of Askerley was anxious to gain an *entrée* to Mrs. Archer's parties. No one else knew so well as she did how to choose her guests, how to amuse them, and how to leave on their minds that delightful impression of being appreciated and so gratifying to the visitor; for she was one of those women who, without a trace of insincerity, please all their friends simply by the exercise of unobtrusive tact.

One lovely August evening the scene in Mrs. Archer's old-fashioned drawing-room would have refreshed the eyes of the most critical and fastidious looker-on; and Mr. Horace Deane, who was certainly not a man easily pleased—appeared to think that Askerley society was not so very dull after all, and that his hasty conclusion that he should find his visit unendurable might be modified. Certainly those pretty girls, in their flowing muslin dresses, moving about the garden with that unconscious grace which is always so charming, listening to the whispered nothings that their admirers appeared to know only too well how to say, made a very pleasing picture. Then Mr. Deane looked back into the softly-lighted room, where a slight brown-haired girl was singing that—to her—sweetest of songs, "Only," in a full rich voice.

Somewhat, Mab Scott, with her proud look and rather reserved manner, seemed to interest him more than any one he had seen for some time. Her face was one that would strike a stranger, not so much by its beauty as by the quick changes of expression which made it fascinating. She had a way, too, of looking at people as if she expected a good deal from them, which generally gratified them; but then came a provoking change of manner to indifference, as if they had disappointed her, which had on one or two occasions chilled the admiration which her beauty had inspired.

Horace went softly over and listened to the song.

"Is that one of your favorites, Miss Scott? I always wonder why young ladies are so fond of these melancholy ditties. Now, if I preferred that style of thing, there would be little cause for surprise. People who have lived unsatisfactory lives, and got tired of themselves and everybody else, might be supposed to indulge in sentimental regrets; but you have the world before you, and know nothing of trouble and weariness, and yet you are like the rest of us. You all sing as if you had some mysterious hidden trouble which it consoled you to pour forth in song."

"Now, Mr. Deane," said Mab, looking up at him, laughingly. "I know you think that you have said something delightfully sarcastic, and yet not rude, and that I ought to feel what grand noble beings men are who have lived unsatisfactory lives and got tired of everything, but let me tell you that I'm not at all impressed, and not in the least ashamed of my songs. I dare say we poor despised women have more real troubles in our humdrum lives than you men in your travels and excitements and varied experience can have any idea of."

Mab had become excited, and her brown eyes were flashing gloriously—the charge of sentimentality was always a tender point with her—but all the answer she received was a quiet little smile.

"Do you suppose that I have no longing to see the world," asked Mab, clasping two very pretty hands together—"that I'm not always wishing myself away from this sleepy, gossipy, old-maidish place, where I feel just like another, and nothing ever happens? I'll say no more—you're laughing at me!"

"Indeed I'm not; I was thinking that I would give a good deal to be so enthusiastic about anything."

At that moment Mrs. Archer came to carry Mab off to act in a charade, leaving Mr. Deane wishing that he had known Mab ten years ago, and wondering what he had better say next to get another good look at those flashing eyes; indeed, he devoted himself so entirely to Mab for the rest of the evening that the pretty Miss Wilson, the Dean's daughter, began to think that her chances of captivating the new arrival were getting fewer every minute.

Mrs. Archer was alive enough as to what was going on around her, and in the weeks ensuing noticed that Horace always kept close to Mab Scott at all the parties—for which Askerley was famous—that the pair always managed to have a great deal to say to each other, that a little later long silences often fell upon them, and yet that they never seemed to be dull or weary of each other. From these and many other circumstances Mrs. Archer drew her own conclusions, and was well pleased to think that her changeable, melancholy brother seemed in a fair way to settle down and end all his wanderings "in a nice, satisfactory manner, just like any one else," as she said, and just, too, when she was beginning to give up all hope of ever seeing her wishes realized.

And Horace? He had loved once in his life before seriously, besides having had several flirtations and platonic friendships, more or less lasting; but now, for the first time since Mary Lee's death—ten years ago—he began to find himself longing for a home and the love of a good woman, and making up his mind that the one woman in the world for him was Mab Scott, and that, if he would not love him, then no woman should fill her place as long as he lived.

As the weeks sped on Horace felt that his other loves were as shadows compared to this; but he let them pass without saying

anything decisive—he had got to the age when a man is afraid to disturb a happy present, even for the sake of a happier future.

All these attentions of Horace's had not been unobserved by the young ladies of Askerley. The Dean's daughters did not arrange it, in so many words, and themselves, that they would do their best to alter the position of matters, but there was a tacit understanding to that effect.

One afternoon the three girls were walking in the Deanery garden, and, as Mab Scott was presiding, they deemed the time favorable for the commencement of their manoeuvres.

"What a delightful man Mr. Deane is!" began Laura. "There's a kind of charm about him that no one seems able to resist. I'm sure he could make me do anything he liked. But of course, Mr. Deane, you know more about his peculiarities than I do."

June, the pretty one, chimed in without giving Mab time to answer.

"It's a great pity—really a great pity—that he is such a flirt. No doubt all the stories about him can't be true"—and Jane shook her yellow hair, and looked pensive.

But I'm afraid it's quite true that a girl in Devonshire is breaking her heart for him. She thought he was in earnest, silly little thing, and he was only amusing himself, as usual. It's lucky for all of us that we are too sensible to be taken in by his fascinating ways."

Laura stole a glance at Mab, but she could not be certain whether these well-directed shafts had gone home. Mab laughed a little, and joined in Jane's congratulations as to the prudence of themselves and their friends, and was in all respects the same as usual, except that no one could induce her to sing during the evening; and, when Horace strolled in, hoping to escort her home, he found that Mr. Hawke, one of Mab's admirers, had been beforehand with him.

Poor Mab! feeling somewhat painful that night; she said over and over again that she had been deceived, and was the laughing stock of Askerley.

"I know those horrid girls meant more than they said, but they need not have thrown out their hints to me. I hate him, and every one shall see that I do; no one shall ever think that I'm breaking my heart for him. And yet I think he does like me. No; I hate him—I despise him—I wish that I may never see him again!"

And then she threw herself on her bed, and cried as only girls very much in love can cry, and fell asleep kissing the rose that Horace had given her the day before.

The next morning this easily-deceived young lady had a great deal to tell her friends when he called, but finally decided that she would receive him as usual—that he should discover no change in her save in her manner. Horace very soon found out the change. There were no songs and no idling in the drawing room for him that day; Mab had to go and see some poor people, and finish some work, and the next night, when he went to her room, he found her brown eyes went out brightly, and left her face hard and cold; while poor Horace puzzled himself as to the reason of this inexplicable change.

Day by day the breach seemed to widen between them, till Horace longed to provoke her to a quarrel, in the hope that the reconciliation might bring them together again; but Mab's indifference appeared to be too complete for him to hope for success in that rather dangerous venture. At last he determined to tell Mab that he loved her; and one evening toward the end of September he found his opportunity.

They were strolling by the river side, and he thought that he had never seen her look so lovely. The moonlight came down given way to softer one, and she seemed to have forgotten the coquetry of the last few weeks. Horace bent down and hurriedly whispered—

"Mab, I love you! From the first day that I saw you I think I must have loved you; and I can never love any one else—never, never, as long as I live!"

He was holding her hands, and was waiting impatiently for her response. For a minute Mab let him wait, a thrill of joy running through her heart. Unconsciously her head dropped till it nearly touched his arm; then she remembered the stories that she had heard, and drew away her hands, answering him with cold tones, but not daring to look up.

"You play a queer part well, Mr. Deane—you are quite a master in the art of profession!"

He flushed red with anger and surprise. "What do mean?" he exclaimed. "Can you tell me that you don't care for me, Mab? Were all those soft looks of yours only assumed? Can you doubt me? You must believe me, Mab! I tell you that I love you. You shall believe me! No man ever loved before as I love you."

Why could she not believe him? Her heart was telling her all the time that he spoke the truth, and that she was willfully throwing away her happiness; but her pride would not let her give way. For one instant she faltered when she looked up and saw the light in his eyes; but then she thought to herself that it was simply dissimulation, and she said, slowly—

"I do not care for you, Mr. Deane, and I cannot believe in your love for me."

"No one will ever love you half so well; and I trust no other man will ever love his heart upon one as I do."

His voice was low and sweet, and she looked up startled, but he had turned away with out a word of farewell, and left her standing by the stream. She watched him stride along the path till he had nearly reached the turning at the end; had he looked back, she might have called him to her, but he was too deeply wounded to yield in the slightest degree. That night Horace Deane left Askerley.

Winter in Askerley was generally very enjoyable; plenty of good skating, with musical parties, and endless other amusements, made the time pass pleasantly enough, and no one was gayer and more ready to be pleased than Mab Scott. She would not own to herself that she might have made a mistake in respect of Horace Deane's love, or show that she repented of her wilfulness; but when her half sister, Conny Andrews, came home for awhile, Mab seemed to be glad to let her take her place in society, and was fertile in excuses for remaining quietly under the parental roof-tree.

Conny was a general favorite, and had a character for suitability which her family were apt to consider rather unnumbered; certainly she possessed a talent for getting into the good graces of her friends. She was generally away on long visits to some of her father's relatives, and Mab and her mother found that the course of their lives ran more smoothly in his absence.

One day, while Conny was away from home again, Mab was returning from the cathedral in a very listless mood, when she met the old postman toiling up the hill to Mrs. Scott's house. He gave her a letter, and when she saw the handwriting on the envelope, she felt relieved that

Conny was not with her. Harriedly tearing it open, she read that Horace was unable to forget her, that he could not live without her, and that she must believe in his love. He was staying at a village eight miles from Askerley, and would give her a week to decide; meanwhile he implored her to think better of him and be assured of his truth.

Mab's first feeling was one of great joy to think that she had not lost him; surely she might believe him now. The rosy flush on her cheeks and the light in her eyes would have set Horace's mind at rest forever could he but have seen them.

How that week passed Mab could never exactly remember afterward. She took long, solitary walks, one day letting herself think of the happiness that was within her reach, and another remembering her old doubts, and deciding that she would never see Horace again.

She had told her mother of her decision for her decision a week, and she intended to write to him on the following Wednesday; but her pride would not let her keep to the day, and it was Friday afternoon before she left the house to post her answer. It was very short, only—"You may come over and see me."

The snow was deeper than ever and the wind keen and cutting when Mab started, but she cared nothing for the weather as she walked quickly along; so busy was she with her happy thoughts that she did not see Horace himself hurrying across the road to overtake her. He had waited patiently till the week was over, and then, when no answer came, had ridden over, determined to make her listen to him, and feeling surprised that she should treat him thus badly.

"Mab, I have come for my answer," he said, as soon as he had reached her side. "I have waited the time—why do you treat me so? A stranger is worthy of as much courtesy as I have asked from you. Perhaps you did not mean to notice me at all."

All Mab's newly-acquired softness and gentleness and faith died when she saw the subject of her thoughts before her, and with the letter in her pocket that he would have given words to see, she looked him straight in the face and said—

"Your answer is, 'No.'"

"Mab, you can't be so cruel—you cannot mean it. All these months I have tried to tell you, but it is of no use; day and night I have thought of you, and I did hope that you might have missed me, that you were not quite indifferent to me. Now you merely tell me that your answer is, 'No—no!' Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him."

"Perhaps you care for somebody else?"

She knew what prompted her to stoop to an untruth, but she said—

"Yes—I shall be married shortly."

"In that case I will trouble you no more; and he bowed coldly and turned away."

For a moment Mab stood rooted to the spot, then she hastened after him.

"I have come to tell you that I have decided to go to you for nothing, and if no one will ever love me as well as you do."

He only said very gravely—

"I am sorry that you should did so much to me that you are obliged to have recourse to an untruth to rid yourself of my presence. I go abroad to-morrow—you need not fear that I shall annoy you any more."

He waited a minute to see if even then she would relent; but, though she was longing to cry out, "Horace, I love you—forgive me!" the minute passed, and she said nothing. He moved away; and this time Mab knew that there would be no coming back—she had thrown away his love forever. The excitement and the cold told upon her never very strong frame, and in the months of illness that followed, Mab had plenty of time to repent now that it was too late.

With her recovery from severe bodily illness, Mab, now that Horace had left her forever, knew that he was more than all the world to her, and that in losing him she had lost everything. Mrs. Scott fortunately was not a woman of much penetration, and had not discovered her daughter's wretched little history; nor did Mab tell her. "What was the use?" she thought. As to Conny, there was never much confidence between the two girls; and Mab knew that she must expect no sympathy from her for such foolish conduct, and so she kept her secret to herself.

Nearly a year after Mab's illness, when Mrs. Scott and her daughter were staying at the seaside, and Mab was trying to persuade herself that she was forgetting Horace, a letter from Conny very quickly undeceived her.

"I'm having great fun," Conny wrote—"the most intense enjoyment. There are delightful people here, but by a long way the nicest person in a Mr. Deane. He is rich, handsome, and looks as if he had gone through a great deal—which is my style, you know, Mab—and he has as good as proposed to me. I need not say what my answer will be. All the girls here are wild because I have cut them out. I'm doing the gentle and childish, and I find that I've no doubt that my next letter I shall have some news to tell you."

Mab started up, her face aflame.

"Cruel, cruel! He need not have chosen her. Oh, how can I bear it! Oh, Horace, my dear, my own, she will not love you; she only cares for your money! It's all your fault, my own fault!" And she lay for hours sat moaning and crying that she loved him, that he was hers, and that Conny should not take him from her.

Conny did not know that Mr. Deane knew her sister; she was frequently away from home, and there was so little sympathy between the girls that when she was at Askerley any confidences that passed were nearly always of Conny's numerous flirtations. Poor Mab! This was indeed the last bitter drop in her cup. She could not go away; she must stay and see Horace make love to Conny before her very eyes, and she must pretend that she was indifferent—that he was no more than a stranger to her.

Soon after Conny came down to St. Ives, the seaside resort at which the Scotts were stopping—lighting up the quiet house with her gaiety.

"Mab," she remarked one day, "Horace is the dearest fellow—rather quiet, but so fond of me. To tell you the truth, I rather liked Captain Jameson—the man that's been spicing up me so long, you know, and Conny smiled prettily, "but he was good for nothing more than a flirtation, and when Horace appeared, and made advances to me, I threw poor Harry Jameson over, and—well, I met Horace half-way."

"No doubt," said Mab, dryly.

"I wonder what he'll think of you, you white little thing! My goodness, Mab, now that I look at you, you're rather gone off!"

But what on earth can you have to do with that sleepy Askerley? If you went through half what I do—up night after night until all hours, with the wear and tear of half a dozen flirtations on hand at once, and knowing that you must make a decent match, and that time is getting

short—you might well look ill. I often wonder that my hair has not turned gray with all my cares—which reminds me that my gray hair is not becoming, and that I must do it up instantly."

"What a wretched, small hearted thing you are!" broke out poor Mab.

"Very likely; but my investments pay better than yours, my child; so I don't think I'll take the trouble to change them now."

"How can you sit there thinking of nothing but your wretched dresses, when you ought to be so happy? Oh, Conny, make him a good wife!" and the brown eyes filled with bitter tears.

Conny put down her work, and looked round at her sister.

"What do you mean? What ever has come to you? Mab, what is it?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing! I only hope you're happy."

"Then why on earth are you sitting there crying your eyes out? Of course I shall be happy—I always am when I have my own way, and I am going to have it now. Mab, my child, confide in your prudent and extremely clever elder sister. Are you in love? Poor little thing, is she crying for her lover, and won't be come to her? Or what is it?"

Mab said nothing; she was doing all that she could to check those sobs which were so unusual with her, and to speak then would have been impossible. She held her hands tighter over her eyes, and thought what an utterly foolish girl she was—she would hide it all from Conny; and she looked up with her face drawn and white.

"There's nothing the matter with me, Conny, save that I feel a little melancholy to-day."

Conny, who was a young person of discrimination, smiled, and said, "Oh!"

"Don't ask me any questions, dear," remarked Mab. "My troubles are all over, and all the talking in the world won't set them right. By the by, I know Mr. Deane's address. Askerley last winter, staying with Mrs. Archer. Has he ever mentioned me? Does he know that you are my sister?"

Mab tried very hard to put her questions in a most unobtrusive tone of voice, but could not help betraying herself. Conny came straight over to her, and took her by the shoulders.

"Come, then, Mab, look me in the face and answer—do you love Horace Deane? No? Do you think that you can deceive me in that way? Is this the cause of your looking so ill, and of the change in you? Now tell me the whole story, from beginning to end, and don't attempt to keep one single bit back."

Conny, like nothing now—it's all over. Let me go away and hide from him and from everybody. Do you think that I would be so wicked as to spoil your life? It's all my own fault. I'll never tell you—never!"

"Very well, then, he shall."

The threat was too much for poor Mab, and with white, trembling lips she told the story of her wilfulness and pride and her passion. Not a word did her sister say till she had finished, and then Conny shook her head thoughtfully.

"My child, I won't say that I'm not sorry, because that would be a story. I will just observe that I'm rather unlucky, and that it is annoying, when one has made an end of matrimonial worries, to find that one has caught somebody else's property after all. But, thank goodness, those spiteful Wilsons don't know anything about it; you shall have your Horace, Mab, and I'll do the self-sacrificing elder sister, and give you both my blessing."

"Are you mad, Conny? Do you think that I will interfere between you and him? No; he's yours now, and if you say another word, I'll go straight off to Aunt Lucy's, and not come back till you're safely married."

"Now look here, Mab. I don't pretend to be an angel, and I don't mean to say that I'm not sorry and disappointed, or anything else you like; but, if you think that I'm mean enough to take your place, I'll be a proper wife after all. But, thank goodness, those spiteful Wilsons don't know anything about it; you shall have your Horace, Mab, and I'll do the self-sacrificing elder sister, and give you both my blessing."

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"Possibly, you foolish young thing! However, I must leave you, to manage my own affairs, and I'm very hastened out of the room, run into the garden, and had a 'good cry.' Presently she returned to the house, revolving various plots and schemes in her head; and, when Mab appeared in the drawing room shortly afterward, she found her sister, sitting at her little work table, as bright as ever.

For two days, he's gone and for Horace, spending the time in learning to know and appreciate each other as they had never done before. Mab, to restrain her feeling of happiness, tried to think that he must have changed, and conjured up pictures of his coming and looking coldly at her; then she shuddered to think that they might come true, as the children say, and

When he did carefully shift his head, so as to be able to gaze through the inequalities of the bark, it was only to find that the men had disappeared—there was no trace of a living being in view.

Heavily stepping out he glanced in all directions, but without result. The thicket extended for a long distance in either direction; and if they had proceeded along its edge, they would have been yet in full sight.

The inference then was, that they had passed through it, an opinion strengthened by the fact of their having approached it so directly. But how? He knew it to be a mass of briars; and so far as he remembered, impenetrable to human foot.

Yet they must have found some avenue through it. They could not have vanished in the earth, or have fallen from view over the treetops. The hope rose strong in his mind that he was on the right pathway to the secret den of the law-breakers, and that he was right in his deduction that this hiding-place was in some natural cavern in the limestone rock of Sugar Hill.

Leaving his covert, he stepped hastily to the spot on which he had last seen the men. Yet this advance was not made without the caution which he had hitherto manifested. He feared that they might yet possibly be in sight of this spot and might notice his movements.

But all there was of gravelly stillness. The insects and birds were taking their noon-tide siesta, and all nature seemed to be lost in slumber. The only sound audible was a faint whisper of the wind in the leaves.

The thicket here was, as he had supposed, impenetrable. It was composed of thickly grown bushes of from four to six feet in height. Thorny vines grew and twined about these so closely as to make a tangle of briars, which could only be entered by the busy assistance of a sharp axe or hatchet.

They had not gone through here, that was evident. He could see a slight impression in the earth where they had stood, but his woodcraft was not sufficient to trace their steps over the hard ground to and from this point.

About ten paces to the left ran the stream at which the deer had been drinking. It here emerged from the thicket, through which it cut a narrow path, having evidently its source in some spring on the hill-side.

The water was about two feet wide, but very shallow at the point where it emerged from the bushes. It ran over a rocky bed, gurgling down in miniature falls at every few yards of its progress.

Over walking in the bed of this rivulet, over which the bushes quite met at top, the thicket might possibly be passed. After convincing himself by a walk of fifty yards in each direction, along the margin of the thicket, that it was penetrated by no other path, the hunter concluded to try the watery avenue, as the pathway by which Gillespie and his companion must have disappeared.

The water gurgled and pulsed around his feet as he planted them carefully in the bed of the stream, and pushing aside the overhanging bushes with the barrel of his rifle, commenced to make his way inward.

As he proceeded the stream became narrower and deeper, the bushes leaning over till they seemed to twine together and close the passage. But they were not linked by the running vines, and were easily set aside. It was, in fact, just such an arrangement as men using this for a secret avenue would have sought to produce.

In this deeper part the water bottom became rocky, a layer of stones of a rather sticky consistency, being the soil washed from the hillside and settling in the deeper pools. He now emerged in a clear spot of some ten feet diameter, and extending as many yards back. Here the rock had been washed bare of soil, and was therefore unable to support the growth of bushes.

At the upper end of this the passage through the stream seemed to be closed. It narrowed till it was not more than six inches in width, and the bushes, growing close to its margin, joined above the water, till the green surrounding wall spread without a break save in the direction in which he had come.

But he was not the man to be so lightly baffled. Confident that the gambler and his companion had entered the thicket by this avenue, he felt sure that there must be some secret passage inward. His first care was to examine the stream where it again entered the thicket. Its confined borders had deepened here till it was a foot in depth. The water was cold and clear, and the muddy bottom plainly visible.

Looking down through the running water, he saw, with delight, the faintly defined marks of human footprints. The stream here formed a pool, without motion at the bottom, so that the marks in the mud were not obliterated as quickly as they would have been in the more rapid water below.

There was no longer any doubt. He was on the track of the gambler, and probably in the secret entrance to the hiding place of the gang of criminals who had baffled the officers of the law, and even the sharp eyes of Col. Davy Crockett.

He stopped a moment to consider whether he had not better be satisfied with his present discovery, and return for assistance before advancing further.

But Ned Gordon was not lacking in that spirit of daring which leads men into the most dangerous positions, and the natural desire to complete this enterprise himself soon decided him to endeavor to proceed.

Advance was not as difficult as it appeared. He found that the vines entwining the bushes failed to reach across the stream, or, more probably, had been carefully removed, and that the wall of vegetation was easily parted with his hands, so as to yield him a ready passage in ward.

He went onward in this manner for about ten feet, stepping on the sides of the pool so as to avoid the deepest water. It now grew shallower, and widened so as to afford ready passage.

Onward by this easier path he proceeded, encircled by a dense thicket of bushes that would have deterred any not possessed of positive knowledge of the use to which this avenue was put. To any other it would have seemed an idle and purposeless waste into the thicket, with no possible gain except wet feet and scratches from invading thorns.

The bushes grew even more dense and high as his path led him some short distance up the little slope, down which the shallow water shot with great rapidity. He was walking under the shadow of bushes higher than his head and embowered above him, so as quite to conceal him from observation by any one in the forest without.

A few steps more and what was his surprise to find himself in the opening of a narrow cavity in the rock, quite concealed by the bushes, and out of which the stream flowed.

He walked warily on, the cavity widening as he advanced, till it was some four feet wide, with a rock floor about ten feet above his head. A few steps more and it opened out into a small chamber, of some ten feet diameter and the same height. Across the floor of this, from a cavity beyond, ran the stream, while from the rocky roof de-

pendent some imperfect stalactites, paralleled by a layer of stalagmites on the floor. While looking curiously around this strange antechamber to the cavern, he was startled by a familiar voice at his side.

"So you've dropped in to see us, then? That is very clever of you."

Turning hastily, he beheld the eyes of Jack Henderson gazing mockingly upon him.

(To be continued in our next. Continued in No. 22.)

A WOMAN'S VOW.

BY MARY E. WOODSON.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ANGELA TRESEYLIAN.

The halls of the St. Juste Female College were brilliantly illuminated, and crowded almost to suffocation with the *haut ton* of Paris.

It was the closing night of the commencement exercises of that renowned institution, and patrons of the school, from almost every country known to civilization, were present. Officers, civil and military, bankers and millionaires, were present, and the scene was one of imposing dignity. Orders of rank glittered upon the bosoms of proud men and fair ladies, each more or less interested in the honors to be bestowed upon relations or friends. The hour of opening had almost arrived, when Monsieur D'Etoile stepped gracefully across the platform, and led Earle Templeton to a conspicuous seat in front of the dense audience.

"You are, then, to make yourself known at your own pleasure?" he whispered the latter.

"Yes," replied Templeton. "I prefer that she should be spared the restraint which a consciousness of my presence might impose. Have no thought of me, I implore you. I would see her, above all, at her ease."

Monsieur D'Etoile then retired behind the scenes, and soon after the curtain rose and was followed by a brilliant overture by a number of the young ladies of the institute.

Then the debutantes, one by one, were introduced, and began to receive the congratulations of their graduating seniors. Pretty girls, with the sparkling freshness of the school about them, prettily dressed, and with some very pretty ideas, as Templeton was forced to confess, though often a half-suppressed smile lurked for a moment in the corners of his expressive mouth.

"Angela Treseylian—parents English," said Templeton, looking up quickly, and saw before him upon the platform the child over whom he was henceforth to stand as father and tender counsellor—a child no longer now, for the perfect figure, bowing with easy grace toward him, was not that of a school girl, but of a woman conscious of her dignity and determined to maintain it. He had scarcely remembered, when the letter of the president had come to him that Mademoiselle Angela Treseylian would receive the highest honors of his school at the close of the present term, that it had been nearly eleven years since he had placed her in his charge, and that she was now nearly seventeen years of age. He had thought of her as the same star-eyed, rather sadly pretty child whom he had taken leave of then, while she clung weeping about his neck, and whom he had seen but once since, and who had half an hour only, when she was last seen, been quietly speculating whether she would look as she had done then, and if he would be able to guess at her identity from those imperfect recollections. He was still picturing her as a child, when the full grown woman burst upon him—yes, burst upon him, for as she stood there, imperial in the brilliancy of her hair, and glowing in the radiance of her face, as only the rising sun would have done at that hour of the night. A strangely blended image of father and mother, she seemed to rise up from the graves of those buried years, and the sight of her smote him with a pain he had not felt since then.

"How beautiful!" was the involuntary exclamation on every side, but he did not heed it. He saw with a ring with that terrible death cry of "Carroll Treseylian when his murderer fell upon him, and with the broken hearted sigh of her mother when she had fallen asleep upon his breast. To-night he could not view her critically as the rest were doing. And could she stand the test of those pitiless worldlings seeking for some fault at which to carp, some defect that must detract from the star of perfection in that first coup d'oeil?

Truly he thinks so, if woman ever did. The sweet grace and luxurious outlines of her perfect form were clearly revealed by the gleam of foot and coronal lights, and its pose was that of the unconscious grace of a classic statue, with her unbroken white draperies falling about her, a wealth of tawny, amorous hair, not golden or Auburn, but yellow, with the faintest suggestion of red, that peculiar shade so sung of by the poets, so seldom seen in life—was arranged about her perfectly rounded head with an artistic skill that can be acquired from a French hair-dresser alone, and which, once acquired, was one of the distinguishing features in all the future toilette of this really wonderful woman. Her skin was dazzlingly fair, without moor or freckle to mar its beauty; and the delicate rose-tinted light of young hope and desire that burned upon her cheeks made pensive half-confessions as it swam in the depths of her large, almond-shaped eyes. The lips were beautiful—the corners of her mouth as had been heard to say that they were a trifle too full—but the never fading carnation glow was their own, and her regular teeth looked like pearls in a coral setting when they parted with one of her entrancing smiles. Altogether it was a face brilliant, tender, passionate in its depth of expression: a face that (unless or Titan would have delighted to give to canvas and make life forever. Nor had nature left her work unfinished. The side of the white boot, just visible where she stood, was petite almost to a fault, and her fair hands revealed their faultless shape as she toyed for one brief moment with the roll of MS. she held.

The bush was instantaneous as she began to read, and preserved unbroken, save in moments of involuntary, rapturous applause, until she had finished. Templeton, recovering by slow degrees, looked at her in greater secret amazement than any one there.

Her voice was low and sweet and rich, that all powerful and excellent gift in woman, yet her intonation perfectly distinct. The subject she had chosen was "Hero Worship," and she handled it with a skill rarely displayed by a novice in literature. Her imagery was as beautiful as herself, and though her reasoning might not at all times have been as vigorous as his own, Templeton observed with satisfaction that there was not one mean or common-place sentiment from beginning to end.

Amidst a thunder of applause bowed gracefully to the audience and vanished from sight.

Templeton arose and followed her through an interior hall and along a corridor to where she stood talking for a moment with some of the professors and a bevy of her companions.

"Miss Treseylian," said Monsieur D'Etoile, "you were very anxious an hour since to know if your English guardian had arrived. Let me have the honor of placing your hand in that of Mr. Earle Templeton, and of renewing my congratulations to you both."

"Ah!" said Angela, looking up at Templeton with one of her sweetest smiles, "the face that did most to compose me in all the audience. I felt how much was due to myself, when I was about to incur a criticism that it seemed to me that fear would begeth. Yet if I had dreamed it was you, I think my dread of the future would have sealed my lips in hopeless confusion."

"I was, then, correct in not making myself known," he said. "But, Miss Treseylian, with the memories which your face and voice bring back to me, I must at once express the hope that fear will never be a feeling that I shall awaken in your breast."

"If your letters and instructions with regard to me have been in any wise expounds of your heart, I am sure I never shall be afraid of you," she responded, warmly.

"You will go back with the audience to-morrow," he said. "I am from the program that you are to sing the song of our language which never can grow old—especially to the wanderer and him whose ties have all been severed—'Sweet Home.'"

"Yes," she replied, looking now at Monsieur D'Etoile with another of those smiles which none ever resisted. "It is there that I have just begged off. You, guardian, as for me, I have no talent for song, and as for Monsieur, he had better hear my excuses. I should only shame him to-night. My strength has positively all deserted me since my last exertion, and—indeed I cannot."

"Perhaps she is right, monsieur," said Templeton. "She has done herself and you such credit that it might be dangerous to let a woman's nerves farther."

"She has seldom failed to have her own way," replied the professor, "though I can as truthfully assert that she has never failed to use the gentle and refined arts of her sex to obtain it."

"You will then retire?" continued Templeton, looking at his ward.

"With your and monsieur's permission, yes."

"Then good night. We will leave to-morrow for Calais, and then home." He turned away with D'Etoile, and soon after left the house.

"She has the graces of father and mother combined," he thought, with a sigh as their images rose before him. "Well, I am glad of that, for in the most fastidious society I may be proud of her."

CHAPTER XL.
STILL ON THE TRAIL.

Angela Treseylian displayed nothing of the weariness of which she had complained on the previous night, when Templeton took the seat beside her—the place that would henceforth belong to him—on the train that was to take them from Paris to Calais. Sparkling vivacity spoke in every glance and gesture, and she listened amusedly at his suggestion that perhaps it might have been more considerate if he had permitted her to rest, at least for a day, after her exertions on the previous night.

"My exertions were not very overpowering," she replied. "I have remembered that your kind instructions to the guardians of my youth were that I should be permitted to take life easily, and I have obeyed them in full. I am afraid I have worried them not a little by reminding them of this, when I preferred my own thoughts, or my own literature as I sometimes did to the text-books of the schools."

"Monsieur D'Etoile assured me that in eleven years you had not given him as many hours of trouble."

"I wonder if, after a similar lapse of time, you will be able to say the same thing," she answered, with a smile that was for the moment half-serious. "I am afraid not, for my companions with whom I have been more intimately thrown declare me a positive tyrant."

"Perhaps they only found it a pleasure to humor your caprices," said Templeton. "And you would not expect that of us?"

"But I would not expect that of us," said Templeton, "with all your fame as a dilettante and sage, I shall not be afraid of you, I think. Do you know I had forgotten you entirely, and had even taken up the idea that you were a very old man?"

"I—well I am not young. When I was your age I should have looked upon a man of mine as I now do an octogenarian."

"Yes, but I longed for the time to come when I should return to my native land. I was a little in fear too when I asked myself how my womanly tastes would coincide with yours, but since seeing you I have no fears. We shall agree famously, I am sure."

"I promised your mother, my child, when she left you a sacred charge in my hands, the efforts of my life should be to make you happy, and you must believe, Angela—fer thus I may at once call you—that in all I do, I am still bearing that promise steadily in mind. You are in the bright, unclouded morning of life. I will not tell you how soon your sky may be overcast, or how many of your young dreams can never be realized, but trust me you shall never know sorrow or disappointment if I can help it."

And looking up into the strong, resolute face, Angela Treseylian felt that she should lean upon a reed that was not broken; that in any hour of trial—she had read that they must come, sooner or later, into every life—this strong arm would support her, and this father's tenderness would shield her from all harm.

The shadow that had come over Templeton's face while he spoke, was reflected in her dark, transparent eyes as she looked upon him with timid, as without boldness, into his.

"Your parents are not living?"

"Then was one of the old, old wounds torn open afresh as he answered—'No. They both died before my remembrance, and strangers to each other, as we have been—brought together as we are now—have just been struck with a similarity in our destinies—which I will tell you of some day, when we are domesticated at home.'"

That word thus spoken, sounded strangely sweet to her ears.

"Another bond that should bind us to each other," she answered. "Neither of us has ever known the tenderness of a parent's love; perhaps it was in this that our thoughts have so strangely appealed to mine in your books. We have too, neither brother nor sister. Can I dare to hope, that if I prove myself worthy of your love, I may take a sister's place in your home?"

"Let me stand to you in the double relation of father and brother," he responded, solemnly. "You will consult me where you need advice as you would have done your own honored father, and you will be as unrestrained in my presence as though I were your brother. Thus only can we be happy together. Do you promise me this?"

"In all faith."

"And in that hour, he thanked Heaven to remember afterward, she had spoken the simple truth."

Persons seeing them together thus, along the journey, wondered at the relationship of these two. Her dazzling beauty—as he proudly saw and heard when he had leisure to comment upon it, as he at times sometimes silently watching her on the route—was the theme of general comment; and her endearing unconsciousness of her great charms, an unconsciousness that he thought, with a sigh, must soon be lost amid the unavoidable corruptions of the world—was in his, as in other eyes, one of her most irresistible attractions.

"Who was the rather dashing young lady taking leave of you here, when I left you just now to look after the baggage?"

"A very good one, for one moment," replied Templeton. "her will did the rest, and she was gone; so I cannot rhapsodize, if I would."

"Well, you shall do so in time, for she has just promised to visit me next spring, when she will, of course, be your guest. Her father is governor of the island. And some of these days, when you are tired of me, I can be her sister-in-law—for she has a charming brother."

"Is that the reason of your enthusiasm for the sister?"

"No. You mistake cause for effect. I shall like the brother, on the sister's account; for I have yet to see him."

"Then when we have both seen Mr. Clare, I can better tell you whether I approve or not."

"The two fell into a discursive conversation, he pointing out the various objects of interest visible along the shore, until all had faded from view, and he went out on deck.

When he returned an hour later, he found Angela conversing with a strange lady, a lady who might no longer be in the freshness of youth, but who still possessed an unusual degree of beauty, and whose dark eyes gleamed with a singularly brilliant, half-moist light.

"Mr. Templeton," said Angela—and he fancied for the first time that her voice had a touch of sadness too—"you do not, I see, recognize Mrs. Chelsea, a lady who says she once rendered you a service when you were ill and suffering in Paris; but, if you have forgotten the face, you still remember the deed with gratitude, I am sure."

"I do—even to the manner in which Mrs. Chelsea forbade my expressing that gratitude seventeen years ago," he answered, quickly, as he extended his hand. "I am glad to have another opportunity of assuring her that I appreciated the extraordinary sacrifice which she then made in my behalf."

As her hand touched his—which it did with evident reluctance—Angela Treseylian could but observe that Mrs. Chelsea turned deadly pale, and she was about to inquire in alarm if she were ill, when the other reassured her by renouncing her seat, and answering, though with an evident effort:

"I told you, then, I deserved no thanks from you. What I did was in fulfillment of a vow made many months before, and which would bind me to a similar duty to-day."

"Whatever the motive may have been," said Templeton—he had learned to practice a greater degree of consideration for others since those days—its results were none the less of vital importance to me, and should opportunity ever afford, I trust you will permit me to testify my sense of the obligation I owe you, by deeds rather than words. But, madam, I fear you are ill."

Was it a shuddering remembrance, Lillian Thornton, Mrs. Hartman, Chelsea, or whatever other name you choose to call yourself, of a wild, prayerful, agonized entreaty, wrung from your soul in a vain appeal to this man, when he had gone with full determination to fix the stamp of murder upon Ralph Thornton—long years ago? Perhaps it might be; but God grant that in all this intervening time, all the bitter experiences of your wasted youth, and desolate coming age, you too may have found some gleam of remorse for the evil your misguided passions of vengeance may have shed; and that repentance come upon you ere it be too late."

"No," she answered after a struggle, "it is nothing, or at least it is but a passing pain to which I have been accustomed for years. Miss Treseylian—there was another little shiver at the name—" tells me, I think, that your home is to be her home."

"Yes, she was left as a daughter to my charge, and until I can consign her to a happier—which with her youth and accomplishments may not be long—she will find a home with me."

"And, guardian," said Angela, in her soft, winning tones, "Mrs. Chelsea speaks of living always in N. Y. and in London. Let us then hope that our chance encounter here may not be the last."

"We shall meet again," replied Mrs. Chelsea, "and I trust very soon; but in the meantime I must seek my state-room until we arrive. I am really quite over-come."

Angela, in spite of the lady's protestations, still strikes me as being a little singular, she said to her guardian, when she had returned, "she looked at me so closely, and spoke of you in such a strange tone when you were not by."

"Your opinion is the general one, I believe," replied Templeton, carelessly. "She is a confessed enigma that no one unravels. I hope you will not see a great deal of her; for I do not think you could associate with her, and not feel that the shadow which invests her is creeping over you."

"Well, for him that he could not see how this unknown woman was one day to envelop them both in its subtle folds! And Mrs. Chelsea, as she lay in her room, kept murmuring over and over again:

"With her magical beauty—for she is a thousand times more lovely than the mother could ever have been—far handsomer than Miss Alvan was—was with the soul in her face, that he, in his works, professes to adore, he could not avoid it, though he were made of iron. He must—he will love her; and then, but not till then, till he is ready to clasp her to his bosom as a bride, shall he know all the dark, bitter, frightful truth. He has rallied before; but from that blow there will be no recovery; and he shall drag out the remainder of his existence with a crushing weight of shame and humiliation."

Aye, Earle Templeton, look to your armor now, and let it be invincible!

CHAPTER XL.
ANGELA TRESEYLIAN IN SOCIETY.

They lingered but a week in London. Earle Templeton, as usual, deputed himself with all the grave dignity of twice his years—and Angela, in fresh, child-like entrancing wonder at the novelties of that great city which she had never seen; but the weather was still warm, and as soon as possible, he started for N. Y.

The splendors of this new home astonished and delighted her. The building itself was large and finished with a novelty rarely seen in the finest specimens of modern architecture; and the internal adornments might have befitted the private residence of a king. It must have required years, even with his exquisite taste, and now limitless wealth, to have collected in every room and corridor, such an endless variety of articles of vertu of every description. Furniture of ornate and bold, and Dresden framed mirrors dazzled her at every turn; but of all these, her own suite of apartments delighted her most.

How much he must have thought of her comfort in that one week they had passed in London; yet how little he had spoken. She found that many of the beautiful adornments here could have arrived but a day before her; and their exquisite freshness and airiness enchanted her. And her first supper-bell startled her, as she lay back in a luxurious fauteuil, with the way light gleaming over her until she seemed too fair for earth, in her own chamber, with its rich hangings of pale sea-shell pink, its bed and cabinet of quaintest device and beauty, its gorgeous mirrors, its crystal vases of flowers, its gilded carvings of perfections, and its nameless appendages of luxury and grace.

And when, a moment later, she floated like a soft breeze laden with delicious odors, down the broad stairway and into the supper-room, where Earle Templeton stood awaiting her, it cannot be wondered at that he felt as if he were in a dream when he looked at her; or that her well-trained servants should have gaped until for the first time they seemed out of place and awkward.

She had a word of praise for everything: the tea, the biscuit, the cream and bonbons were all so much fresher and better than at school—though every one knew that Monsieur D'Etoile had kept a table equal to any first-class hotel; not that the chambermaids and cook were in raptures with the new young lady.

She had taken her seat at the head of the table, at Templeton's request, without any of the airs or affectations that other girls of her age might have assumed; and when they arose, she took his arm and passed out into the brilliantly-lighted corridor.

"Now show me our sitting-room—for I may as well inform you at once, that you will have to give me an hour or so every evening, until I get sleepy. I am not in the habit of keeping bad hours; for I have been used to bed like a good child; but I cannot endure solitude after tea; and we will come to know each other, and be very good friends."

"Nonsense was soon—as you are kind enough to make it—more cheerfully granted," she answered. And she could not dream how delightful it was to him to have her talk to him in this unrestrained and familiar manner—to him of whom the rest of the world either stood in awe or fear.

"For if there is a time that will lie heavy on my hands, it has been the first hour or so of the night when I am usually alone, and most idle; and I remember that my youth is all gone, and that so much of its precious time was recklessly thrown away."

"Ma foi!" she replied lightly, "how often did I pretend to Monsieur D'Etoile that the faintest suspicion of a headache was overpowering, because I wanted rest, to remain in my room, and read your last great work, that all the beau monde were growing mad about. Who was that old busybody, the utilitarian, who would weep at night when he could say 'I have lost a day? Well, he was an old humbug, for his life was full of them, just as mine has been, I dare say. You talk of your youth being gone and your time wasted, when at forty years of age you have won a reputation to which all the world bows in acknowledgment, and your brow is as free from furrows as mine. Pie, then, guardian, Heaven must punish you yet, for you are wickedly ungrateful."

He did not answer, for he had thrown open the door of a drawing room and stepped back with one of his courtly bows, that she might precede him. As she entered a superb grand piano and harp were the first objects that greeted her eyes, and with her passion for music she glided delightedly to the former, and running her fingers over the keys, took the seat and dashed through several brilliant performances. Then she burst into song, and her rich soprano voice rolled through the room, and thrilled Templeton with a rush of bygone memories where he stood with folded arms looking down at her with a new light in his eyes.

"Now for your sanctum, your library," she said, breaking off at last and coming to where he stood. "But I must warn you in time that you may repent the day you introduce me there, for they tell me you have a famous collection of books and curiosities in it, and you will not be able to keep me out unless you grow absolutely terrible."

"I sincerely trust it may amuse you," he answered, leading her across into a large octagon-shaped room, whose walls were lined with splendid volumes, "and hence I had your music-room adjoining it. My sanctum, as you choose to call it, my writing-room, is just beyond, through the door leading to the left. That you would not care to visit more than once, for its

bushes of old letters and parchments and quaint MSS. would do nothing but suffocate you with their centuries of dust. Here, however, you may come and go, or remain at all hours that you wish. I shall be within call to answer any questions or to give you any information that you wish."

"And in less than a week you will be wondering why I could not have remained a child forever at Monsieur D'Etoile's."

"Let us wait and see."

He began to show her his cabinet of curiosities he had picked up while a wanderer in the east; and then she took a casual survey of his books. He found her intelligent and appreciative to an extraordinary degree, her taste refined, her wit and vivacity ever ready, and the moments glided pleasantly by. He had sunk into a chair to show her something at a table, and when it was through she drew a small ottoman to his feet.

"Now I want you to tell me about my father and mother. I have been dying to hear you speak of them. Am I like them?"

He rested his hand for a moment in benediction upon her golden-crowned head. With that look upon his face he did seem to her like a father indeed.

"It is a sad story, my child."

"Ah, but I should know it, and I thank Heaven that I am to hear it from your lips. You loved them both?"

"Heaven is my witness, Angela, that I did."

He told her of their beauty and their promise—the greatness and honor of the father, and the winning graces of the mother. He enlarged on the paternal kindness and forbearance of the former to himself, without which he assured her he himself would have been worse than nothing, for his strong, unruly passions would have destroyed him. And when he came to that dark tragedy which had blighted their lives, he strove with all his wonderful mastery of language to tell, to soften its horrors; but they were still ghastly to her ears, and the tears found their way unrestrained down her beautiful cheeks.

"Dear child," he pleaded, "let me spare you the miserable details."

"No, guardian," she whispered, softly. "It has been such a comfort to my soul, to hear you speak of them as you did, and I must know all."

He could not gainsay her farther. He knew that she had a right to know, and he told it all, though each word was a dagger to his breast.

"And I may not even have the consolation of weeping by my father's grave," she sobbed at last.

"No, Angela, the body was never found. They were taken down by the current of the swollen current of the river."

"Oh, merciful God, to be food for sharks or birds of prey!"

"Hush, hush. Remember, Angela, there was no consciousness. At one time when life seemed a burden to me, I had the greatest desire to be lost at sea. I had only a horror of being put under earth, and I shuddered at the thought of the world. He himself too, had sometimes expressed the same thought to me in life. And I thank God to recall at this hour, that I aided in doing him all possible justice here. I saw that vengeance was executed on his murderers."

"And my mother's heart was broken?"

He had averted his head, and his voice was strangely low.

"Can you wonder at that?"

"Oh, no. Death could have been only a relief to her. And I am so thankful—oh, so thankful that it came, though I have felt sometimes that I would have given my own life to have had her live long enough to caress me once when I might have remembered it. How fearful it must be to have the one being dearest to us in all the world snatched from us by a sudden and terrible death!"

She did not dream what a blow she was dealing him, as that widow's heart-broken cry in the vale of Bohemia long years ago came back to accuse him of the murder of her peace.</

"I do not believe you are happy. I have been thinking that I disturbed the quiet of your life, and if I have, oh, will you not let me go elsewhere?"

There was a wistful pathos in the deep eyes, as she looked up through her tears. "Silly child, I swear to you that as you are a tender care, so you are the only consolation of my life to-day."

And after that she believed that her presence was a comfort and solace to him. Earl Templeton had been elected to Parliament from N—; and when the time of the winter session drew nigh, he took Angela with him to London. As he had anticipated, her wonderful beauty, her wit and grace, and her reputation as an heiress, soon made her the reigning belle of a large and select circle, and he found himself doubly courted by rising young men, both for his political influence and the favor they might win in her eyes.

London ladies of rank may have murmured at first that this untitled girl, with the freshness of the country about her, should have appeared in their midst and created a furore. But such was the case, and they, too, must bow to the sceptre of her charms. Her jewels were resplendent. Her dressing was as rich as it was exquisite, and she began to be quoted as the mode. Her lovers were numbered by the score, and Templeton began to fear greatly that at her tender age she might be spoiled by so much adulation; but as time wore on, his watchful eyes saw not the slightest indication of vanity in word or look, and the dignity of her manner was alone relieved by the vivacity of her conversation.

On an occasion of considerable political excitement, when Templeton was to make one of his powerful speeches, Angela had accompanied several ladies into the gallery of the Lower House, and sat for long hours, herself spell-bound, her eyes fastened upon him with a proud and tender light, while the lucid, classic, resistless flow of his oratory rolled through the house. Lord and repeated cheering greeted him at the close, and when he conducted his young wife forth, every eye was fastened upon them. In the house the next night all the chatter of his manner and the awe inspired by his genius could not save him from unnumbered questions with regard to the young lady under his charge. "Since she is not your wife," said the Honorable Douglas Stewart, the youngest member of the house, a gay and dashing young man, "and you are so stoutly comported at his side, 'and we were all afraid she was, you will introduce me at Lady Melbourne's ball to-morrow night?"

Templeton knew that Douglas Stewart was a lion of the first blood in all circles; and however much he might object to the easy assurance which had prompted the question, he dared not refuse. His attention to Angela Tremellan, from the first hour of their meeting, were intentionally marked. He considered her by far the most attractive woman he had ever met, and with his frank and open nature he had no desire to conceal his opinions. He was her escort at theatres, operas, balls and churches whenever she would permit him to be; and other young ladies, seeing that the Honorable Douglas Stewart was lost to them, sincerely hoped that the match would be a speedy one, before this girl could catch and damage other game in her nets. Of course they could never dream that she would do otherwise than accept him. His name still headed the list of her declared suitors, when business of a pressing nature called Templeton back to N—, a short time before the end of the season.

"Lady Melbourne has urged me to place you under her charge as her guest until my return," he said to Angela. "And with your permission I shall do so. Your time would be most agreeably spent. Her house is at once the resort of belles and beaux."

She would cheerfully accede to whatever he thought best, she declared with her accustomed amiability, and the matter was accordingly arranged.

Templeton bade her a formal adieu and hurried on to N—. He wrote her at the end of a week that his business would detain him longer than he had expected, but she might expect him to run up for her about the end of the month.

Three days from the reception of the letter she was startled by a telegraphic message—"Your friend, Miss Clare, arrived here yesterday. Of course it is impossible for me to leave. Lady M. will see that you are safely on the train to-morrow morning, when you will reach here at 2 P. M. Angela was in rapture. "The darling," she cried. "It was exactly like her, not to let me know. I long to see her once more, and to be back at home."

(To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 16.)

THE GREAT LONDON FOG.

Its Terrible Effect Upon the City.

A London letter says:—This has been a week of fog—the densest and darkest known for several years—and people are still coughing and gasping from the poisonous effects of the villainous mixture of gas and coal-dust which has been pumped into the lungs. London has been more than half smothered. The fog was not confined to the streets, but penetrated into warehouses and offices, so that even with gas and candles it was scarcely possible to see to read or write. Being on the eve of Christmas, this is of course a very busy time, and the docks are full of ships waiting to discharge their cargoes, but while the fog lasted—from Tuesday to Thursday, and it is hardly gone yet—nothing could be done in this way.

Even the omnibus drivers were puzzled by finding "no indication where the crescents go," and strayed from their accustomed tracks into the most unfamiliar by-ways. Navigation was entirely stopped on the Thames and the canals, and the could only make their way through the town with the help of a torch-bearer at the horse's head. On the whole, people in the city have not had a pleasant time of it. To breathe a suffocating and poisonous atmosphere, to have to grope about the streets in a darkness more impenetrable than that of night; and when half-blinded by the stinging vapor, to be exposed to the onslaught of electric vehicles, makes up the sum of human misery.

In midday the passengers in the trains could not see across the platforms against which they were placed. At the same hour the Waterloo road was in absolute obscurity, so that there was neither any sign of the other side of a crossing, nor the faint glimmer from a lamp at half a dozen paces distance; and the most care was necessary in order to avoid collisions with passengers. Somewhat later in the evening there was a temporary diminution of the cloud, but during the night it again increased; and, although slightly altered in color by the diminution in the quantity of smoke it received, because, if possible, thicker and more pestilential than before. At two o'clock in the morning a person standing in the middle of Oxford street

could not discern a trace of the houses on either side, and when midway between two lamps could discover no light from either. Theatres, concert halls, and other places of amusement were all filled with the irrepressible mist, so that the stage was dimly seen amid the blaze of gas; and singers warbled, as it were out of a cloud. Altogether the loss inflicted on London must have amounted to some hundreds of thousands of pounds.

No less than twenty-three dead bodies have been taken out of the docks east of the city; eight other persons have been drowned in the canals and in the river, and the list of persons injured in various ways in consequence of the fog, reads like the report of the wounded after a great battle. Many of the injured were knocked down and run over by carriages having wheels with india rubber tires—a new invention which has lately become very popular in the West End. These carriages are almost noiseless, and in a fog they are very dangerous.

The fog of these three days, however, was by no means a local trouble, for provincial intelligence shows that it prevailed very generally, and that it was continuous along the valley of the Thames into Oxfordshire, although in certain directions it terminated abruptly within a few miles of London.

Such fogs, although not unusual in a less severe form, are not as common in London as some people imagine, but they are so serious in their consequences that attention is being directed to their cause. The Times says:

"Meteorologists will probably enlighten us as to the nature of the connection between the fog and the high barometric pressure that has recently prevailed, and will explain why so much moisture has been precipitated from an atmosphere that does not appear to have been exceptionally laden with it. There is every reason to believe that the more effectual surface-drainage has greatly diminished the frequency of thick fogs in London; but as the fact remains that at certain seasons of the year they are liable to occur, and to occur in a manner that fully verifies the oldest traditions with regard to them. At the same time, the increasing bulk and population of the metropolis, and the increasing traffic of all its great thoroughfares—the river, the railways, and the young men of the house, a gay and dashing young man, "and you are so stoutly comported at his side, 'and we were all afraid she was, you will introduce me at Lady Melbourne's ball to-morrow night?"

Templeton knew that Douglas Stewart was a lion of the first blood in all circles; and however much he might object to the easy assurance which had prompted the question, he dared not refuse. His attention to Angela Tremellan, from the first hour of their meeting, were intentionally marked. He considered her by far the most attractive woman he had ever met, and with his frank and open nature he had no desire to conceal his opinions. He was her escort at theatres, operas, balls and churches whenever she would permit him to be; and other young ladies, seeing that the Honorable Douglas Stewart was lost to them, sincerely hoped that the match would be a speedy one, before this girl could catch and damage other game in her nets. Of course they could never dream that she would do otherwise than accept him. His name still headed the list of her declared suitors, when business of a pressing nature called Templeton back to N—, a short time before the end of the season.

"Lady Melbourne has urged me to place you under her charge as her guest until my return," he said to Angela. "And with your permission I shall do so. Your time would be most agreeably spent. Her house is at once the resort of belles and beaux."

She would cheerfully accede to whatever he thought best, she declared with her accustomed amiability, and the matter was accordingly arranged.

Templeton bade her a formal adieu and hurried on to N—. He wrote her at the end of a week that his business would detain him longer than he had expected, but she might expect him to run up for her about the end of the month.

Three days from the reception of the letter she was startled by a telegraphic message—"Your friend, Miss Clare, arrived here yesterday. Of course it is impossible for me to leave. Lady M. will see that you are safely on the train to-morrow morning, when you will reach here at 2 P. M. Angela was in rapture. "The darling," she cried. "It was exactly like her, not to let me know. I long to see her once more, and to be back at home."

(To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 16.)

THE GREAT LONDON FOG.

Its Terrible Effect Upon the City.

A London letter says:—This has been a week of fog—the densest and darkest known for several years—and people are still coughing and gasping from the poisonous effects of the villainous mixture of gas and coal-dust which has been pumped into the lungs. London has been more than half smothered. The fog was not confined to the streets, but penetrated into warehouses and offices, so that even with gas and candles it was scarcely possible to see to read or write. Being on the eve of Christmas, this is of course a very busy time, and the docks are full of ships waiting to discharge their cargoes, but while the fog lasted—from Tuesday to Thursday, and it is hardly gone yet—nothing could be done in this way.

Even the omnibus drivers were puzzled by finding "no indication where the crescents go," and strayed from their accustomed tracks into the most unfamiliar by-ways. Navigation was entirely stopped on the Thames and the canals, and the could only make their way through the town with the help of a torch-bearer at the horse's head. On the whole, people in the city have not had a pleasant time of it. To breathe a suffocating and poisonous atmosphere, to have to grope about the streets in a darkness more impenetrable than that of night; and when half-blinded by the stinging vapor, to be exposed to the onslaught of electric vehicles, makes up the sum of human misery.

In midday the passengers in the trains could not see across the platforms against which they were placed. At the same hour the Waterloo road was in absolute obscurity, so that there was neither any sign of the other side of a crossing, nor the faint glimmer from a lamp at half a dozen paces distance; and the most care was necessary in order to avoid collisions with passengers. Somewhat later in the evening there was a temporary diminution of the cloud, but during the night it again increased; and, although slightly altered in color by the diminution in the quantity of smoke it received, because, if possible, thicker and more pestilential than before. At two o'clock in the morning a person standing in the middle of Oxford street

could not discern a trace of the houses on either side, and when midway between two lamps could discover no light from either. Theatres, concert halls, and other places of amusement were all filled with the irrepressible mist, so that the stage was dimly seen amid the blaze of gas; and singers warbled, as it were out of a cloud. Altogether the loss inflicted on London must have amounted to some hundreds of thousands of pounds.

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ITEMS OF INTEREST.

AN Indian squaw, three feet high and 85 years old, is on exhibition at La Crosse.

A Japanese student at Ann Arbor, was recently beheaded and received into the Methodist Church.

West Point ear rings have appeared. They are of similar design to the button worn by the cadets.

A clergyman at Haslemere, Pa., recently accepted a note to a wedding notice in a local paper, announcing that it was the union of a man, apparently a mechanic, recently created a sensation in Boston, by walking about with a placard on his hat on which was inscribed "I want work."

That water will find its level was recently shown at Marion, Ohio, where, on Christmas day, a Mr. John C. Water was married to a Miss Caroline Level.

The fatal dog killer of Cleveland, Ohio, reports the killing of 1100 animals for the past season.

A man in Chester county has been laid up for several weeks from the effects of a scratch on the heel, inflicted by a cat.

Mrs. Samuel Colt, of Hartford, signs every check and order need by her revolver foundry, and takes a walk through the establishment twice a week.

A man was turned out of a Memphis theatre because he signified his applause of an actress by shouting, "Bully for you, old top."

The St. Louis Law Association refused to admit to membership a lawyer who advertised to obtain divorces with secret dispatch.

China proper contains nearly one-third of the human race, and is the most densely populated region of the world.

A girl in Baltimore recently tried to commit suicide by setting fire to her clothing. She suddenly changed her mind, however, and cried lustily for help, which was fortunately at hand.

A St. Louis alderman expressed the opinion, which a reporter was cruel enough to take down verbatim, that "horses is 'frailer of dummies than street cars."

A party of burglars at Yonkers, N. Y., were recently tracked by the footprints left by them in the snow, and the whole arrested with the plunder in their possession.

A modern Solomon says: "None promises are 'more honored in the breach than in the observance,' but the expense and safety of the action depend a great deal on the sentences of your lawyer and the temper of the woman."

At Abington, Mass., recently, a young lady was making her toilet, preparatory to her wedding, which was to have taken place on the same evening, when she was taken suddenly ill, and remained in an unconscious state until she died, two days afterward.

The Montreal firemen are to have a new kind of respirator, consisting of a metal case filled with glycerine and powdered charcoal. These will not only preserve the men from suffocation, but also effectively prevent them from yelling, which all firemen seem to think is particularly efficacious in extinguishing fires.

Coleridge, when lecturing as a young man, was once violently hissed. He immediately retorted, "When a cold stream of truth is poured on red-hot prejudices, no wonder that they hiss."

A steamer recently sailed up in New London, was found to be covered with barnacles, in some places two feet thick. The vessel had been in the water little more than a year, and during that time had been used as a ferry boat, running almost constantly sixteen hours daily.

The Rev. J. M. Drake and wife, of Lima, Ohio, have just died from poisoning. They were preparing to paper a room in their house, and in tearing down the old paper, which was of a deep green color, dust was created, which was inhaled by them, and they were poisoned by it. They died within a short time of each other, and were buried on the same day.

Among the civilized things wanted by the Emperor of Japan has been a delirious dream of a Japanese, who has been finally fixed upon the (th) of November, and the Emperor liking that day as well as any other, has accepted the date.

Melbourne, Australia, has a law which has recently come into operation, by which persons brought before a police bench charged with insanity, said insanity having been caused by excessive drinking of liquor, are to be sent to a lunatic asylum, and treated as criminal lunatics, and not, as heretofore, forwarded to a benevolent or other asylum to be treated as afflicted individuals.

Among the many recent adaptations of the electric current to practical ends, is that having for its purpose the giving warning in case of a leak in the ship's hull.

The entrance of water into the hold establishes the current which in turn sounds the warning signal.

A Harwood, of Ipswich, has been experimenting on the popular theory, that where a fireplace is so situated that the sun can shine upon it, the solar rays will put the fire out. Mr. Harwood used night lights, and in tearing down the old paper, which was of a deep green color, dust was created, which was inhaled by them, and they were poisoned by it. They died within a short time of each other, and were buried on the same day.

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The Inquisitive Woman.

The other day, on the Amherst Railway, says a correspondent, I sat near a coarse-voiced woman, with nose and eyes which looked as if made expressly for prying into other people's business, and a form which indicated that she had found the occupation a thriving one. Opposite to us sat a handsome young lady in an elaborate suit of sage green, with an elegant copy of Middlemarch on her lap. The sharp-voiced woman stared at her very hard, flung out a good deal, and leaning over, commenced a conversation in this way:

"Look agent, I see! Have good luck?"

"You are mistaken, madam; I am no agent!" (much astonished)

"Oh! Ain't you a? Thought perhaps you was."

"No," (looking out the window)

"You go to school, perhaps?"

"No," (with a smile)

"Oh, you don't? Thought perhaps you did," with a long respiration; and looking her over as she thought she was not making much progress, she spied a heavy gold ring on the third finger of the left hand, and commenced again:

"Married?"

"Yes," (with a glance at a tall gentleman who stood in the rear end of the car, talking with the conductor).

"Oh! and these are your weddin' fixins. I might have known it," running her eyes from the janny hat down the multitudinous folds and ruffles to the dainty French kid boots. "Husband forthcoming?"

"My husband has the same number of hands as other people, madam," (very sharply), and she made the best of her way to a vacant seat at the other end of the car, while the inquisitive woman settled back, as if she felt wronged at not having met with her usual good success.

"Bride, perhaps?"

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RHODA.

BY HIRYL KEIM.

She was a very commonplace-looking person, so quiet that she was seldom noticed. Small and plain, with soft, gray eyes in her face, and a soft, gray hair, it was a low, soft voice which made music of the most trifling utterances.

Rhoda was not the family favorite, giddy Amabel, with her fluffy frizzes and blue eyes, was petted and indulged; but if Rhoda ever expressed a wish to go any place, it was immediately an impossibility. Oh, no! Rhoda must stay at home and take care of Ida, or even, mother wanted some bread made, and so it was not to be expected that Miss Amabel should take any part in such coarse work, Rhoda invariably stayed.

"Why, I don't know a gridiron from a frying-pan!" Amy was wont to proclaim, in her infantile voice, to a circle of admirers. "I often tell Rhoda that she'll never be good for anything but a housekeeper," this with a dippant laugh, and a "killing" glance at Charlie Sherrick.

Mrs. Price, her mother, was a dry, hard, fussy little woman, who never forgot that once on a time she had been a pretty beauty. It seemed strange that Rhoda's brother Harry, with his kind, handsome face, and gentle, womanish ways, should not have cared for her, and as for Jim, he should have been eternally grateful to her for her motherly care of his motherless child, but such is man! He cared no more for her than he did for the broom which swept out his room. In her father, Rhoda had one real friend.

"Rhoda shall not be imposed upon," the old colonel would say, stroking the dark hair with his large hand, and in return his dippers were always ready for him, and his toast beautifully browned, in a way that passed Amabel's skill entirely.

Amabel was a profound egotist, even to the exclusion of every one else—earth, air, and sea were filled with one gigantic I. It was her ailments, her comfort, her loves, and her dislikes. With Rhoda, she always assumed a languid, superior, sighing manner, as if her sister was very, very, very beneath her. She was willing enough to put a flower in her hair and sit down to sew by an open window, so that all the passing gallants could see her, but when called upon, oh, dear! "Rhoda must finish her work—no one ever wanted to see 'Rhoda' of course."

"Amabel, dear, just put some flowers in the vase," Mrs. Price would say.

"Yes, mamma," and Amabel went straightway to Rhoda and said, "I wish you would fill the vase. I have a fearful headache."

Rhoda acquiesced without a word, and it was by her perfect taste that the parlor was so faultlessly arranged, the curtains tastefully lowered, flowers in the vase, and pictures, framed by Rhoda, on the wall.

"Any has such taste," Mrs. Price would say, all unconscious that it was not Amy's work, and so it became a settled thing that Amy had "such taste." She was also called "bright," that is to say, her conversation was a conglomeration of admirers, fashions and parties, interspersed with playful little shrieks, which she thought especially killing.

Rhoda sat making a dress, and patiently sewing the seams by hand for Amabel had taken possession of the Wheeler & Wilson, when Amy turned round to her and said:

"I can't fix this needle. I'm afraid of pricking my fingers. Rhoda, yours are so rough that it won't make any matter—come and do it." This in a coolly imperious tone.

Rhoda rose to comply with her command, and as she did so, Amabel gave her a scrutinizing glance, and said with an affected giggle:

"Gracious, Rhoda! you're so old-fashioned, one would think you came out of the ark. What do you think Charlie said? He saw you crossing the yard this morning, and asked you that 'gay' question! I was so glad that your old-fashioned ways were your face, for I should have been mortified to death if he had seen who you were," she added, with a complacent look at her pretty dress which had "cost over so much" at Madame Lamouche's.

"You forget, Amy," answered Rhoda's low voice, "that I have a great deal of work, and I am seldom allowed the use of the sewing-machine."

"Oh, yes. I forgot that you are an ill-used heroine. Ha, ha! a heroine with such hands as yours!" she said, as spitefully as possible.

Having finished her task, Rhoda returned to her work, Amy not having remembered any thanks.

"Ida, put on your hat before you go," Rhoda said to Ida, as she was leaving the room.

The child turned round, and said, impatiently:

"Now see here! I'm just tired of that old hat—no hush up!" after which she banged the door.

Amabel laughed, she always laughed when Ida was impatient to her aunt. She flung her work to her sister.

"Do finish it. I must go and practice. Will you come to meet me, darling? For Charlie will never forgive me if I don't sing for him."

You see she was "accomplished," though what she had accomplished, would have been hard to say. Rhoda had none of these accomplishments, and if any one asked her to sing, she would say, "You might as well ask Mother, but it's no use."

Impulsive Amabel rushed into Mrs. Price's presence and made her request, crying, "Oh, please, please let her come!"

"Quite impossible," said Mrs. Price's dry voice. "Rhoda must take care of Ida."

"I suppose she helps you a great deal," said Amabel, trying to be cordial.

"Oh, the one that helps me most isn't here!"

man was hugging and kissing her, and saying all in a breath—

"Oh, Rhoda! is it possible that you've forgotten Marsh Stone? Your old friend?"

"No, indeed! I have never forgotten you, Marsh," answered Rhoda, her soft eyes brightening prettily.

"You see I am married—and dear Tom and I are going to housekeeping here, won't that be nice?"

After that Rhoda did not have a very dull time. Mrs. Marsh Tallis was always coming to ask her advice upon the fitting-up of her new home, and consulting her taste, and asking her all about house-keeping. Something in the arrangement of her parlor did not suit Marsh, and nothing would do, but that Rhoda must come and help her.

While she was there, a cousin of Mrs. Tallis's happened to see the patient little worker, and hear her speak, and asked Marsh: "Who the gray-eyed girl with the beautiful voice was?"

Rhoda Price, come and be introduced."

She obeyed. Have I said that Rhoda was plain? Well, so she was, when she had nothing to enliven her, but if she had had a ride occasionally through shady lanes, or a trip to the seashore, to brighten her eyes and freshen her cheeks, she would have been a different girl. Her pretty, dark hair was put plainly back—Amabel knew many pretty ways of arranging it, but when Rhoda had asked her, she had cried, "Oh, law, Rhoda, you're too stupid to learn."

In the first place she was too lazy to teach Rhoda, and in the second her sister's plain dress was an excellent foil to her own gay attire.

Rufus Redmond began by admiring her voice, and thinking her a nice girl, and as he watched her perfectly and completely, she worked, and what an artist's taste she had, he ended by thinking her very attractive, and liking to talk to her. Once Marsh invited her to spend an evening with her; so Rhoda put on her very prettiest dress, a soft gray, that matched her eyes, arranged her pretty hair in a way Marsh had taught her, and, finally, nestled a half-blown white rose in her hair.

Marsh thought her changed girl, and watched her talking to Rufus, her eyes shining, her pale cheeks reddening, and her sweet voice ringing gladly, while as she smiled, she showed her perfect teeth.

"Rufus," (as they called him) was talking to her of Browning's poem "The Ring and the Book." "My rose I gather for the gaze of God," quoted Rhoda, softly.

"I agree with you," he said, glancing at the rose in her hair.

She looked at him with her misty gray eyes—no one else was in the room—why shouldn't she take his hand?

"Thine eyes gray-ly in shadowing hair above," he said, very low, doubtless catching the inspiration from her look. He might have ended still more, had not Marsh entered.

"Rhoda's a nice girl, isn't she, Tom, dear?" said Marsh, that night.

"Piffle! kind of face," assented "Tom, dear."

Next day Mrs. Price and Amabel returned, and to Amabel's total disgust, the servant brought Rhoda a magnificent bouquet of fragrant white roses.

The pale face flushed as she read Rhoda's name on the card attached to the flowers!

"Who sent them?" asked Amy, enviously.

"It must be a mistake."

"At least do not grudge me my flowers, Amabel," said Rhoda. "Rufus Redmond sent them."

"Why, he's a splendid catch—rich and handsome. Better not set your cap for him, Rhoda," she added, exultingly, and would have devoted herself to Rhoda, had not the forward Amabel frustrated him, and obliged him to talk to her. His manly soul quickly appreciated the delicate compliment of her anxiety for his conversation, and his mental comment was:

"Pretty girl, and fond of me!" Lo! this was all sufficient. Every time he called her became more attentive to Amabel. One day she was yawning over "The Holy Grail," which Rhoda had sent her, upon the very slight authority of her saying that she "loved poetry," when Harry, who was just from Kivertown, entered and flung a small box into her lap. The trinket-loving Amabel opened it, and beheld with rapture a handsome pair of bracelets. Perhaps it was the rustic of Rhoda's work that made him remember her, for he turned in a shamefaced sort of way, and said:

"Positively, Rhoda, I forgot you."

"Since you have forgotten me so long, Harry," she said, raising her eyes, "you need not trouble yourself. I saw the reproach, for his handsome face flushed; but that night Rhoda found on her table an excellent copy of Poe's poems, which she had long wished for. "How did you like the way we mended your gloves?" she asked him the next day.

"Why, Rhoda, Amy told me she had mended them."

"That was a mistake," said she quietly, for she could see right through Amy.

"Good Heavens! what a story-teller Amy is!" was his involuntary ejaculation, then very gently, "perhaps you have often mended my things?"

"Yes," she said, and stooping suddenly, he kissed her cheek and walked hastily out of the room.

Mrs. Tallis came and told Rhoda that she was going to Kivertown, and positively she Rhoda must go with her. For a moment a bright vision of theatres and operas floated through Rhoda's brain, but in the twinkling of an eye she remembered that she said, in her old quiet way, "You might as well ask Mother, but it's no use."

Impulsive Amabel rushed into Mrs. Price's presence and made her request, crying,

"Oh, please, please let her come!"

"Quite impossible," said Mrs. Price's dry voice. "Rhoda must take care of Ida."

"I suppose she helps you a great deal," said Amabel, trying to be cordial.

"Oh, the one that helps me most isn't here!"

Marsh could have wrong Mrs. Price's neck with pleasure. She said good-morning, hastened home, and flinging herself into a chair, scolded tumultuously, much to Tom's horror, called Mrs. Price a "hateful thing," and said the way Rhoda was treated was shameful. "Now, wasn't it, Tom, dear?"

Tom whistled, raised his eyebrows, and sympathizingly said, "Poor little thing! knowing nothing of the matter."

Rhoda stared out of the window at the sunset woods of Penhurst, dyed with a red sun, where the Swift, always in a hurry, was huddled over its stones, in haste to reach the river. An open quivered in the breathless air—a quail whistled from the stubble field. Rhoda realized that her life was a failure—one of those dreary flats that stretch away and seem to loom the sky in the distance. Ah, Rhoda! perhaps somewhere in the far beyond your life shall touch the sky.

Any entered, quite good-natured in her trunks, as she twisted a diamond ring in her finger. "Look, Rhoda, my engagement ring! If it had been a bit less handsome, I'd have dismissed her on the spot."

"Let us wish her joy of her bargain. According to her own confession, Amy

doesn't know a gridiron from a sauce-pan," and therefore cannot be a finished housekeeper. Maybe in after years Rhoda may yearn for Rhoda's muffins. Being a man, the muffins will strike him most forcibly.

"I should never have believed it of Rhoda," cried Marsh, when she heard the news. "That deceitful Amy! Horrid thing! I thought it was Rhoda!"

And Rhoda? Well, she lived. The bell rings, and the curtain falls. "Passes, passes, monsieur et madame!"

The fire burns low, and the weird gray shadows sit to and fro upon the wall. The ashes fall softly from the smoldering log, and the waning moon is in the sky. A church bell rings across the world.

"Out, out, brief taper!"

"That is all over. Those confounded ring transactions have made it impossible for me ever to re-enter political life. It is a wonder that I came out of the last campaign alive. Why, I was killed and rotten-legged all over the district!"

"And served you right!" cried the woman, with sudden fury. "You had no excuse for being dishonest—and yet you would be a liar and trickster. I see you now in your true colors. You married me for my money, and—"

"And you married me in order to get into decent society," hissed Dalton.

"Well, have I not carried out my part of the bargain? You have exhibited your diamonds and painted cheeks in Washington society for a couple of winters. Is not that enough? Great Jupiter! The bare recollection of it ought to make you a happy woman for the remainder of your life!"

What woman would forgive such a speech—what woman could? Mrs. Dalton was on her feet in an instant, and, sweeping across the room, she passed to give expression to her pent-up rage.

"Not another dollar do you get from me!" she screamed. "You sordid wretch! You have lived on my bounty, and robbed me! And now you insult me! If you choose to remain in my house—my house, do you understand?—after this, I will give you food and shelter. I do that much for my dogs. But you shall not squander my fortune!"

The door closed with a bang, and the Hon. Richard Dalton was left alone. White with speechless anger, he stood with hands pressed to his throbbing heart. But only for a moment. The natural firmness of the man asserted itself, and he coolly reviewed the present and future prospects. They were gloomy enough, and a black purpose, which had occurred to him before, now took complete possession of his mind.

He was absolutely without money, and something worse than the ordinary penalties of debt stared him in the face. He had recently overtopped that indistinct boundary, where business enterprise ends and fraud begins, and an arrest might occur any day. The last hope had failed him. What could he do now? This question he propounded to himself more than once. At last the wretched man raised his head and listened attentively. Everything on that side of the house was quiet.

Dalton was satisfied that he was not likely to be intruded upon, just then, at any rate. He crossed the room, and opened a side-board, from which he took a decanter and a wine-glass. Filling the latter, he took from his pocket a tiny phial and mingled its contents with the wine in the glass. Then the strong man turned pale and trembled.

"I will write a farewell letter to my wife," he said to himself.

But when he looked for the inkstand it was not to be found. He remembered then that he had carried it to his chamber the night before. It would take but a few moments to get it, and he quietly left the library for that purpose, feeling assured that nothing would occur to interrupt his plan. Strange how one little incident can sometimes make or mar the success of the most important scheme!

The library contained another inmate almost as soon as Richard Dalton had closed the door behind him. It was the lady who bore his name—the woman who, until recently, had been his fellow-placer—the creature who called herself a wife! A precious pair, these two, and well matched.

"Alas, I have something to say to you," the husband began, in a low, earnest tone.

"Very likely," retorted the lady. "I think it is time for you to say something to me, and you will doubtless have a good deal of leisure time in future to say it in."

Without noticing this cruel fling, Dalton motioned her to a seat, and, standing before her, continued:

"Alas, I am sorely in need of money."

"Indeed," snapped the shrill lips of his listener.

"Yes. Money I must have, or I am forever lost."

There was an expression of vixenish satisfaction on her pinched face, as Mrs. Dalton answered:

"You have already squandered half of my fortune, and now you ask me to beggar myself. This is what comes of marrying a penniless adventurer."

"Madame!"

Mrs. Dalton winced. The blinding, non-like eyes of her husband were fixed upon her. She burst into tears.

"Oh, Richard, think of my disappointment!"

"Is it greater than mine? Think of the mortification and disgrace which I am compelled to endure."

For a moment an awkward silence reigned. The wife looked obstinately at the floor, apparently waiting for another appeal. It was not long in coming. Again the frown disappeared from her husband's face.

"Alas," he said, in winning tones, "I must have ten thousand dollars. With that I can settle my debts, and turn over a new leaf. Will you not oblige me, this time?"

"If I let you have the money will it get you into Congress again?" asked his wife.

"Never!" exclaimed Dalton, made sincere for once by his tortured pride.

"That is all over. Those confounded ring transactions have made it impossible for me ever to re-enter political life. It is a wonder that I came out of the last campaign alive. Why, I was killed and rotten-legged all over the district!"

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